United Nations A/S-19/PV.2

General Assembly
Nineteenth Special Session

Official Records

2nd plenary meeting
Monday, 23 June 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (Article 19 of the Charter) (A/S-19/20)

The President: I should like to inform members that since the issuance of document A/S-19/20 in provisional form, Guinea-Bissau has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Victor S. Chernomyrdin, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Victor S. Chernomyrdin, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Chernomyrdin (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): In general, Russia offers a positive appraisal of what has been done to implement Agenda 21 and the other decisions of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Indeed, priority areas and topical issues in the spheres of environmental protection and sustainable development have been identified more precisely. This field has come to the foreground of United Nations activities.

Global conventions on climate change and on biodiversity, born at Rio de Janeiro, are already working, and conditions for launching new mechanisms of international legal regulation in the environmental field are being developed. Much has been done, but no tangible improvement in the Earth's ecology has yet been achieved. The threat of further deterioration of the Earth's environment persists.

The goal of this authoritative forum is to give new and powerful organizational impetus to international environmental cooperation. It is also of crucial importance to secure the balance of interests achieved at Rio among all groups of nations, including the group of countries with economies in transition.

Under the present difficult circumstances, Russia is doing its best to support the efforts of the international community to solve these priority global problems. We are meeting the obligations we have undertaken. In spring 1996 we adopted the concept of the transition of the Russian Federation to sustainable development; at present we are engaged in intensive work on a draft State strategy to implement the goals of the final documents of the Rio Conference.

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This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Let me now address some of the priority areas for further discussion. We believe that the protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases after the year 2000, which is being worked out under the Berlin mandate, should be legally binding and should take into account the common but differentiated responsibilities of States, including, of course, those with economies in transition. In the past few years, in fact, Russia has palpably reduced such greenhouse-gas emissions. We are ready to agree upon new, authoritative measures on compliance with the provisions of the Convention, including agreement on such reductions in emissions.

Russia is firmly committed to the principles of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Despite the prevailing difficulties connected with the introduction of other technologies and alternative substances, we will continue to count on the support of the world community and will do everything possible in this area.

Russia is interested in full-scale participation in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. Practical steps in this field will follow the development and adoption of an additional annex to that Convention reflecting the specific conditions of economies in transition.

As a forest Power possessing one fifth of the Earth's forests, Russia considers it necessary to accelerate work on a convention on forests based on a worldwide comprehensive approach. It would be counterproductive to divide this issue into segments.

We also believe that due attention must be paid to such vital issues as the quality of the world's fresh water resources; the formulation of new, more effective agreements on conservation of the ecosystems of the world's oceans; agreement on international legal mechanisms to regulate the use of persistent organic pollutants; environmentally sound transport; urbanization; and food security.

We are in favour of stepping up the efforts aimed at addressing such cross-sectoral issues as the financing of environmental protection activities, the transition to better use of power, changes in the structure of production and consumption, the establishment of optimal conditions between trade and the environment, ensuring equal access to ecologically safe technology and, of course, stable and predictable financing for environmental activities at all levels. We understand that we cannot do everything at once, but we can and must build up the effectiveness of our useful work together.

Russia views positively the arrangements achieved during the preparatory process for agreements on the rational distribution of functions and duties between the Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Environment Programme and other environmental protection structures, both inside and outside the United Nations system. We believe that it is important to establish coordination in this field and to pay due attention to effective interaction with international financial institutions, the Global Environment Facility and the World Trade Organization.

We believe it is relevant to have a State-by-State integration of existing monitoring and compliance systems of specific changes in the environment — a single global system for ecological monitoring. This is needed for scientific analysis and for correct, concrete political measures at the national, regional and international levels. In addition, such a system could become, in our view, a serious project for international cooperation in the area of conversion.

We also see good prospects in the work on indicators for sustainable development, which are now being prepared in many countries. Ensuring the comparability of indicators and assessments of progress is an extremely important sphere for international interaction.

In conclusion, I should like to express my confidence that our forum will successfully carry out the mission entrusted to it and will take new and important decisions allowing the international community to make real progress towards the sustainable development of all States and the ecological reconstruction of our shared, common house in the interests of present and future generations.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation for his statement.

Mr. Victor S. Chernomyrdin, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. António Guterres, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Guterres (Portugal) *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by delegation)*: The Rio Summit was a landmark event in that it launched a global model of partnership for the promotion of sustainable development, a concept which integrates and mutually reinforces economic and social objectives with the preservation of the environment; a concept which is centred on promoting the well-being of the world's present population without jeopardizing that of future generations; and which is open, democratic, participatory and respectful of human rights and of individual liberties.

The Rio Summit's positive results are noteworthy, but it is also undeniable that it has not been effective in halting the degradation of Earth's life-support systems. Globally, both the world's environment and development are today far short of the expectations of five years ago. It is high time the Summit's conclusions were put into effect.

Portugal has sought to fulfil the commitments of Rio by formulating concrete goals and objectives aimed at sustainable development by the end of the century. In view of this, we have established a National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development, implemented a strategic plan for waste management and sewage treatment, given priority to nature conservation, implemented environmental agreements with partners in the industrial and agro-industrial sectors, and stimulated environmental education both within and outside schools.

But it is important to recognize that the implementation of Agenda 21 is still very deficient throughout the world. To a great extent this situation is due to the least developed countries' lack of resources to promote development. The responsibility for this lack of resources rests mostly with the developed countries. We believe that we can and should do more to promote development and eradicate poverty.

I also reaffirm Portugal's pledge to contribute to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as a principal financing instrument for Agenda 21, and to strengthen it in line with the proposals of the European Union. However, the GEF by itself will not be sufficient to meet all needs. Portugal also wishes to see development assistance being more directly geared to capacity building, the transfer of technology and the sharing of scientific and technical knowledge.

In the context of North-South dialogue, we have a particular interest in partnership, exchange and shared responsibility with those African countries that — along with Brazil — make up the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries. Founded one year ago, the Community has already held its first inter-ministerial conference on the environment. The Lisbon Declaration, adopted at that conference, aims at reinforcing the implementation of Agenda 21 in the seven signatory countries, which have a combined population of 200 million, as well as the setting up of a common environmental observatory.

In the framework of Portugal's participation in the Commission on Sustainable Development, we endorse the initiatives of the European Union with regard to water, energy and eco-efficiency, and we have the following priorities: to bring free trade into harmony with sustainable development while respecting, without disguised protectionism, the multilateral environmental agreements; to support the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the timely conclusion of a protocol on biosafety; to adopt at last a convention on forests on a global scale which encompasses all types of forests and to promote their conservation and sustainable management; and to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

For Portugal, as a maritime country, the oceans are the main and most immediate priority. Signs that the oceans are in an environmental crisis are clearly evident. This crisis must be fought on several fronts by changing the current practice of over-exploitation of living marine resources; by preserving marine biodiversity; by defining and adopting a code of good practices for the integrated management of coastal zones; by combating marine pollution of every kind, including the deliberate dumping of waste in seas and oceans; by strengthening global monitoring and control of the oceans; and by supporting research and technological development of the marine sciences.

In this context, Portugal follows with particular attention the relevant work of the independent World Commission on the Oceans, headed by Mário Soares.

The last World Exposition of this century, Expo '98, will open in Lisbon in less than one year. Its theme will be the ocean.

The International Year of the Ocean will also be celebrated in 1998, a project for which Portugal has lent its full support. Portugal commits itself to be in the forefront of the global efforts for the protection and use of this essential asset of our planet, the oceans.

It is my hope that five years from now we will be able to account for a clearly more positive balance in favour of sustainable development than what we have today.

As a country and as a people, Portugal is ready to participate in all the efforts needed to attain this objective.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic for his statement.

Mr. António Guterres, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Victor Ciorbea, Prime Minister of Romania.

Mr. Victor Ciorbea, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Ciorbea (Romania) (*interpretation from French*): It is a great pleasure for me to participate in this important special session of the General Assembly.

Once again, the world Organization is proving itself to be a broad-based forum that is sensitive to the great challenges facing the world. The presence of so many Heads of State and Government at this session confirms the interest in, and the political will necessary for, continuing and culminating the efforts we began in Rio.

Nothing in Romanian society escaped the effects of pollution during the country's more than 50 years of communism. This is why the Romanian people and the State institutions have such a difficult task.

In the six months our Government has been in power, we have launched a comprehensive reform programme designed to improve the economic, social, political, psychological and, of course, natural environment.

The unprecedented pace of change in Romanian society, beyond the fact that it demonstrates the dedication of the Romanian people to the shared values of democratic countries and the political will of the Government to make up for lost time, has already brought us breathable air in Romania.

The reform programme of the Government of Romania pays particular attention to integrating environmental questions with the needs of economic development. This principle has provided the basis for drawing up the Strategy and National Plan of Action for the protection of the environment and the sustainable use of resources, which include high-priority objectives relating to economic restructuring and the renewal of production capacity through the introduction of effective and non-polluting technology. In the same context, the National Forum for the Environment and Sustainable Development, the National Agency for the Environment, which has branches in all departments of the country, and the National Centre for Sustainable Development have been established, international conventions have been ratified and specific agreements with other countries, particularly neighbouring countries, have been signed. The Government of Romania is aware of the need and the opportunity for cross-border cooperation and the establishment of Euro-regions.

We are paying due attention to and taking action to protect, and ensure the sustainable use of, the resources of the Danube Basin and the Black Sea, as well as mountainous regions, through a significant expansion of protected areas.

Romania's integration into the structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development would be a sure way for us to meet the objectives of Agenda 21 more quickly. We are determined to take measures to ensure that our economic reform and restructuring policy and improvements in our legislative and institutional framework will help bring about the specific programmes and activities required.

This special session must ensure that the integrated approach — the key to Rio's success — will be applied universally. If, together, we can agree on a time for another session devoted to Rio + 10, we will ensure that the process launched in 1992 and the activities that have emerged from this process at the national, regional and global levels will continue.

In our view, and in the light of our experience, the effective implementation of the objectives of Agenda 21 at the national level must be given priority and action must be focused on problems in the areas of energy, transportation, agriculture and, in particular, forests.

The programmes launched in Europe, such as "Environment for Europe", provide us with an example we can follow.

The political declaration to be adopted at this session is designed to reaffirm our political will to act in a spirit of partnership and with greater effectiveness to guarantee future generations a healthy environment and a socio-economic framework that can promote progress and prosperity for all.

I should like to assure the Assembly that Romania is fully prepared to contribute positively and constructively to the successful conclusion of our work.

In conclusion, allow me to remind the Assembly that Romania associated itself with the position expressed by His Excellency Mr. Wim Kok, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, on behalf of the European Union.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Prime Minister of Romania for his statement.

Mr. Victor Ciorbea, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Mbeki (South Africa): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, was a landmark event in humanity's endeavours to meet its needs while simultaneously preserving our planet's natural beauty and resources.

Today, we are gathered to assess our progress towards sustainable development and to recommit ourselves to the objectives clearly laid down and agreed to in Agenda 21.

Developing countries have made significant strides towards putting in place and strengthening their institutions and institutional capacity in terms of Agenda 21. Its implementation nevertheless requires the mobilization of resources, particularly for developing countries. In measuring our achievements since the Conference we cannot forget that the resources committed there have yet to be made available and purposefully deployed. The full implementation of Agenda 21 requires financial resources to be leveraged from several sources.

Official development assistance continues to be a crucial mechanism for funding in developing countries and in the least developed countries in particular. In this context, we would like to reiterate the call for the commitment contained in Agenda 21 — that developed countries should reach the accepted United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance — to be met as soon as possible.

This nineteenth special session of the General Assembly should encourage the international financial institutions and other development agencies to strengthen their commitment to sustainable development. Furthermore, the role and importance of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the environmental sphere also deserves to be reinforced and enhanced. The lack of adequate funding for UNEP needs to be urgently addressed. My Government accordingly urges the international community generously to increase funding for UNEP.

The replenishment of the Global Environment Facility will also have special significance for the implementation of Agenda 21. Consequently, the General Assembly at this special session should recognize the importance of meeting the financial obligations involved in the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility. Given the increasing inter-relationship between trade, the environment and development, the Commission on Sustainable Development should encourage and contribute to the important debate on trade and the environment. In addition, urgent and innovative solutions need to be found to the questions of technology transfer and capacity building in developing countries, without which sustainable development cannot be secured.

In many regions of the world, water resources are threatened by unsustainable patterns of use and by the degradation of aquatic environments. As water resources are of the utmost importance to many countries in Africa and other semi-arid areas in the world, their protection and sustainable use are essential if we are to meet basic human needs, achieve social justice and equality and harmonize economic development, human welfare and

environmental protection. We consider it imperative that substantial global, regional, and national commitments and actions be entered into and sustained in order to reverse the existing negative trends and to safeguard water resources. In pursuit of these objectives, our own region of southern Africa has signed its first regional water agreement, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Shared Water Resources, which is also due to come into effect soon.

A central objective, and a necessary condition for success, of the process of sustainable development, remains and must remain the eradication of poverty. South Africa believes that in the face of persistent poverty occurring in the context of increasing globalization, it is essential that a more resilient global partnership to be forged if we are serious in our quest for sustainable development. The global partnership must build on the acceptance of the need to adopt a balanced and integrated approach to environmental and developmental questions. Honest dialogue and genuine cooperation are fundamental to such a partnership.

We need urgently to prepare ourselves for the developmental and environmental challenges which the twenty-first century will place upon humanity as we strive to promote peace and advance the objectives of Agenda 21, including the emancipation and empowerment of women and the millions in our world who are marginalized by lack of development. Central to this is the Commission on Sustainable Development, which should remain the principal policy forum for deliberations regarding sustainable development.

In this context, we would like to recognize and welcome the work that has been done by and through the Commission to develop a consensus on the wide variety of issues encapsulated in the concept of sustainable development. We trust that the documents which will be adopted at this special session will constitute a real programme of common action to deal with the challenges facing all of us. To this end, the South African Government is committed to playing its full part in future efforts to advance the commonly agreed goals.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa for his statement.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Jagland (Norway): The purpose of this session is for us to rededicate ourselves to action. We have to renew and strengthen our commitment to the national implementation of what we agreed on five years ago. Let us be clear about one thing: Agenda 21 is not up for renegotiation. But we can all improve our performance, and we should all pledge to do so.

Today, I would like to focus on three areas where our joint resolve will help put us on track to a sustainable future. First, we must rededicate ourselves to our commitment to combatting poverty. Poverty is the biggest threat to the environment. In Rio, the industrialized nations recommitted themselves to the 20- year-old target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in official development assistance. Five years later, we are not getting any closer to that objective; quite the contrary.

Foreign private investments are increasing in the developing world, and that fact should be welcomed. But private investments tend not to reach the poorest countries. Some 1.3 billion people live on incomes of less than $1 a day. Millions lack access to basic health care services. Private investments rarely finance hospitals, primary health care or schools, services that are all basic requirements for sustainable development. Let me also emphasize in this connection the critical role of women in the achievement of sustainable development.

Norway remains committed to development assistance. Since 1993, we have increased it from $1 billion to $1.3 billion; that is an increase of 30 per cent in four years. It is the goal of my Government to move to 1 per cent of GDP in development assistance over the coming years.

This brings me to my second point: the huge task of securing growth within the limits set by the environment. As a follow-up to Rio, Norway has promoted the concept of sustainable production and consumption. We in the North have a long way to go to save energy, make our production cleaner and our consumption leaner. And we need to enable the developing countries to make a great leap towards eco-efficient production. We must avoid a

situation in which developing countries base their growth on the most polluting technologies. What the industrialized countries can do is offer their experience and transfer their environmentally sound technology.

Norway is giving priority to the allocation of additional funds for the transfer of such technology. Together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) we are preparing concrete programmes of technology transfer. I pledge here today the readiness of my Government to allocate a package of an additional $15 million to finance such programmes. We believe this initiative will give direct results, and I invite others to join us.

We need a global transition towards cleaner energy resources. We need fair burden-sharing and mechanisms to implement our obligations jointly so that we can maximize our efforts. These should be key features of the climate agreement that we are preparing for the Kyoto meeting in December.

Thirdly, I would like to focus on my own region. The Arctic region remains one of the world's least polluted regions. But the risks to this area are real, largely caused by substances transported from sources outside the Arctic. The Arctic Governments, in close cooperation with the indigenous peoples, will step up the work to mobilize support for the fragile Arctic environment.

Let me also mention the threat from the large concentration of military installations. With the cold war gone, we have discovered one of the most serious legacies of the arms race: the often uncontrolled piles of nuclear and other dangerous wastes. This is a major environmental issue. I would suggest that it be placed high up on the international agenda, also in connection with forthcoming disarmament negotiations.

We made it clear in Rio: Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible. This perspective must continue to guide our action. Today, millions of land-mines represent one of the world's most serious environmental problems. They lay fertile land to waste. They cause immense suffering, not least to innocent children playing in the killing fields.

Time is short. We need to conclude a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel mines. My Government is hosting a diplomatic conference in Oslo in September with the aim of negotiating such an agreement. I urge all participating countries to contribute to that end.

Gradually we are setting a new course. We must ask ourselves: Do we have the tools we need to manage the international environmental process? We need to give environment and development higher priority, higher status, better focus and more resources within the United Nations system. In the follow-up to this session, we should address the need for some kind of taxation on an international level whereby part of our consumption — for example, a tax on aviation fuel — can benefit our common endeavour for sustainable development.

I also believe that we should take a fresh look on how we organize our work. Today, convention secretariats are assembled around the world. Our efforts often lack unity of purpose. We may need a world environmental organization to provide a clearer and more authoritative voice on environmental contributions to sustainable development. Let us make this a part of the United Nations reform process.

The younger generations are impatient. They have a right to be so. It is our responsibility to leave the next generation with at least the same opportunities we had. Their pressure for change should guide us.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway for his statement.

Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Rasmussen (Denmark): Let me start by underlining that I fully support the statement made earlier by my colleague from the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. And let me start by saying also that I feel that the voice of the European Union today is more sustained and more committed than it has ever been before.

Let me be frank by saying that I feel it is necessary that it be so, because if we go straight to the point, we can state as a fact now that, if we are not doing what

needs to be done, it is certainly not for lack of knowledge. Since Rio, we have shared more knowledge of what is right and wrong than ever before.

What has happened? Certainly not enough.

Five years ago in Rio, the world community committed itself to a number of well-defined goals — difficult goals, yes, but not impossible goals. Today, yes, there are some smaller lights; yes, there are some smaller achievements. But let us be honest today: We have not lived up to those solemn commitments. We did not do what we were supposed to do.

It is time for action. The fight against poverty must be placed on top of our agenda. The gap between rich and poor people has widened. At our Social Summit in Copenhagen, we also realized that education, health and participation for women are fundamentals. We realized that you cannot have a secure State without secure people, without secure nature. Now it is time for action. Now we need decisions to reverse this trend.

Sustainable growth and development will not be achieved unless all human resources are mobilized. Empowering women is a part of this. We have to realize that everyone, including indigenous peoples, has a crucial contribution to make to sustainable development. Basic human rights are a part of this agenda.

No human being can survive without fresh water. May I remind the Assembly that about one third of the world's population does not have access to clean drinking water. It is urgent that we take the necessary decisions to ensure access to and protection of fresh water. We must make this the focus of Agenda 21.

I think that the production and use of sustainable and renewable energy are equally important. We need an agenda for energy in the twenty-first century. We need to decide and to act now. And I also think that we have the knowledge here. Let me just mention my own humble country. We contribute about 60 per cent of the world's wind-power-based energy today. We gladly share this technology with the poorer countries and we invite cooperation with this ambitious goal.

Sustainable development will not be achieved without special attention to vulnerable environments. The forest resources of the world must be preserved. Protection of the arctic environment must be given high priority. We support a strengthening of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We find that legally binding reduction targets for greenhouse gasses must be the result of our forthcoming meeting in Kyoto.

Globalization demands political decisions to reach our goals. First, the markets of the rich nations should be open to developing countries. Fair trade is a must. Secondly, we have to ensure that developing countries are not exposed to risks no longer accepted by industrialized countries. Thirdly, we must cooperate to improve working conditions. Fourthly, we must ensure that poor countries do not become markets for outdated technology or recipients of hazardous waste.

We should go together. We should cooperate. We should strengthen our environmental education and training. We should realize new, advanced green technologies. A sustainable future is an ecological future.

Listening to the voice of the poor countries, I hear them saying,

> "Yes, we are prepared to cooperate and shoulder our responsibility for sustainable growth. But then you, the richer countries, have to live up to your commitments, both as far as sustainable growth is concerned and as far as development aid is concerned".

I feel that the most important commitment of all from Rio was this one: that we all promised to strive to achieve the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent in official development assistance — something for something.

My country has reached this goal. In fact, we are at 1 per cent, and we are determined to continue. On top of this, we have made additional funds available for the follow-up of Rio. We have realized a substantial part of Agenda 21 from Rio, and we are prepared to go further.

Globally, however, in the five years since Rio, overall official development assistance in relation to gross national income has decreased rather than increased.

Why are we here? We are here to confirm what we have already decided. Now it is time to act and reverse this trend. The future is built on concrete actions to fulfil the commitments we entered into at Rio. The challenge confronting us this week is to transform these commitments into action plans.

I know that we cannot fulfil all of our commitments overnight. But let us unite in one decision, one single decision: let us unite to reverse this trend in order to make our commitments credible.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark for his statement.

Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. John Bruton, Prime Minister of Ireland.

Mr. John Bruton, Prime Minister of Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Bruton (Ireland): "Each person", wrote the Irish poet John Hewitt, has the right to say, "we shall not be outcast on the world".

In the five years since the Rio Summit, 450 million people have been added to the total human population of the world. Nine out of every 10 births take place in developing countries. We are now experiencing the acceleration of history.

Five years ago, the Rio Earth Summit established sustainable development as a leading goal and challenge for our times. Sustainable development is about empowerment. It is about combating social exclusion, whether within nations or within communities. It is about building bridges of partnership between developed and developing countries. It is about protecting the global environment as the shared birthright of all peoples and as an inheritance to be safely guarded and cherished for those who come after us.

Rio critically highlighted the associated problems of poverty and underdevelopment, and their relationship with environmental degradation. It recognized that combating poverty is essential to achieving sustainable development. It called for a new global partnership involving all countries in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities. In adopting Agenda 21 it set out a framework programme for the pursuit of sustainable development throughout the world.

Our task at this special session is not to reinvent or renegotiate Agenda 21. However, we have to recognize that its potential has been only partially achieved. The establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the commencement of major environmental conventions have been important institutional advances. There has been considerable success at local, national and international levels in the involvement of a range of organizations and groups in promoting Agenda 21.

But there is also accumulating evidence of unsustainable global trends. Poverty and underdevelopment continue to be a serious cause of environmental degradation, with — to take one indicator — half of the world's population still lacking access to basic sanitation. The reality of human-induced climate change is now even more clearly documented than it was five years ago. Forest and species loss, soil degradation and desertification have not been reversed. The arable food-growing area per person in the world is falling all the time, and increases in crop yields may not keep up with this decline in the available acreage. There are now enough boats, hooks and nets in the world to catch twice as many fish as there are in the sea. In short, a global partnership based on sustainable development is still far from fully established.

This conference must reaffirm the relevance and urgency of the Rio Agenda. It must also take account of new driving forces of change. Globalization of the international economy has proceeded with unstoppable momentum since Rio and is reshaping our world in ways that we still have fully to grasp and understand. Globalization does bring great benefits but it also poses new challenges to the promotion of sustainable development in the years ahead.

A new partnership must be forged based on a number of imperatives. Ireland believes that development cooperation policy must continue to play a vital role in bridging the divide between developed and developing countries. We have for this reason increased our development cooperation budget threefold since Rio and are committed to making steady progress towards the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product.

Development cooperation is needed more than ever if we are to build on the progress already achieved by breaking down walls of exclusion and marginalization. We in the developed world have a clear obligation to strengthen the ability of developing countries to promote and sustain their own economic development.

All of us need to intensify policies and actions for the better conservation and management of natural resources. Present consumption and production patterns in the developed world are unsustainable. And in many cases, these unsustainable patterns exist because of misguided subsidies and tax breaks which politicians have difficulty changing because of either vested interests or the costs of the short-term dislocations involved in getting rid of these subsidies. These patterns place our national environments under stress; they are the major contributor to global pollution; and they impose an unfair burden on the less developed countries. Per-capita carbon emissions range from 5.3 tons in the United States to 2.4 tons in Japan to just 0.3 tons of carbon emissions in India. Economic growth of this kind must be decoupled from the intensification of environmental impacts and problems.

Ireland has taken important initiatives, both nationally and in cooperation with our European Union partners, towards making a reality of sustainable development.

We in Ireland have been experiencing historically very high rates of growth since 1993, and it has been an explicit concern of the Irish Government to ensure that this is reconciled with a sustainable environmental outcome.

This special session must renew the momentum and the urgency of the Rio process, and we must continue that work at Kyoto.

Climate change is a critical test of international cooperation for sustainable development. It threatens the global environment and it demands immediate action on all of the matters affecting it.

For the long term, there must be increasing focus on eco-efficiency. The present century has seen remarkable advances in labour productivity, which has increased, depending on the sectors concerned, by factors of between 20 and 100. The next challenge, for the next century, will be to have comparable increases in natural-resource productivity: we must be conservative in the use of natural resources.

This generation is technologically better equipped than any previous one to advance and accomplish the goal of sustainable development. Well equipped we may be. But we will not accomplish the goal if we continue to sleepwalk through history. It is our task at this special session to give a new dynamic and political momentum to this process and to consolidate and renew the vision of Rio. Let us go forward urgently to complete the work of Agenda 21.

The President: I thank His Excellency the Prime Minister of Ireland for his statement.

Mr. John Bruton, Prime Minister of Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Kim Young Sam, President of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Young Sam, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Kim (*spoke in Korean; English text furnished by the delegation*): It is a great honour for me to speak before this most meaningful special session on the world environment, an issue that affects the habitat of all human beings. As many world leaders have already stated, we humans are facing a crisis of existence due to our reckless devastation of the environment.

Fortunately, however, mankind's awakening gave rise to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development five years ago and to the concept of the sustainable development of the global village, a new paradigm of development that is gradually taking root in our daily lives and in our patterns of production.

Still, the numerous and varied achievements we have made thus far are merely the beginning of the process. As we know from experience, maintaining harmony between development and the preservation of the environment is a very arduous and difficult task. The reality is that the Earth's environment is being continuously destroyed faster than it is being restored. Therefore, world leaders should further solidify their collective political resolve through this special session to work for environmental protection all over the globe.

The Republic of Korea, as a member of the global environmental community, is faithfully and concretely abiding by the Rio Declaration, which represents humanity's commitment to protect the environment through the twenty-first century.

Early last year, I proclaimed a vision for environmental welfare, looking towards the twenty-first century. My Government has adopted a national action programme under Agenda 21 to usher in a new era of sustainable development with the support of the entire nation. With that vision, the Republic of Korea is striving to prevent environmental destruction and increase

investments in environmental technology, while promoting public awareness of environmental issues.

Furthermore, we hope that South Korea and North Korea will cooperate with each other to preserve the natural environment of the demilitarized zone separating the Korean peninsula, turning it into a model zone for peace and ecological integrity on the peninsula. The Republic of Korea is also taking an active part in multinational talks on the environment and in the various negotiations on environmental accords, faithfully fulfilling its share of the obligations.

I believe that the admission of the Republic of Korea to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development last year will provide the momentum needed for a new takeoff in our ongoing efforts for environmental protection.

The environmental degradation of the Earth is an issue that cannot be fundamentally resolved without international cooperation. Especially in this era of globalization, such cooperation should be the top priority of nations in order to make sustainable development possible. Advanced countries must provide financial assistance to developing countries to assist in ensuring sustainable development on a global level. The Government of the Republic of Korea is steadily increasing its assistance to these countries, and will continue actively to assist them in efforts to improve environmental quality.

The international community should give special attention to promoting the transfer of environmental technology, a pivotal task in environmental cooperation. To that end, Korea has made a proposal at the United Nations to expedite the transfer of publicly-owned technologies, and together with United Nations agencies is now seeking ways to implement such transfers.

In view of the crucial importance of regional cooperation in accelerating the construction of a global environmental community, my country intends to push actively for cooperation with countries in North-East Asia and in the Forum of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council.

We in the Republic are acutely wary of the transboundary impact of environmental pollution that could result from ignoring cooperation among countries in the region.

Today at this gathering, I would like to draw the focus of international concern to the issue of the safe management of radioactive waste. In North-East Asia, there is an ongoing attempt to transport a large quantity of nuclear waste from one country to another. Such an attempt contravenes the spirit of the Rio Conference. We believe that this transboundary movement must never be allowed, for the sake of our environmental safety, and we hope that international concern and cooperation will intensify so that the plan will be withdrawn as soon as possible. In this regard, I would like to propose that global and regional mechanisms be established to strengthen cooperation for the safe management of radioactive waste.

During the ceremony held in Seoul on 5 June in observance of World Environment Day, the Seoul Declaration on Environmental Ethics was adopted. I hope the philosophy and ethics of the Seoul Declaration, calling for greater awareness of the environment for the sake of freedom and humanity, will provide a spiritual basis for the deliberations of this special session.

All of us should join hands in developing an affluent Earth of tomorrow in ways exemplified by the Asian respect for all living beings and the Asian emphasis on human coexistence and harmony with nature.

The President: I thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Korea for his statement.

Mr. Kim Young Sam, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Dehaene (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): I wish first to express Belgium's full support for the statement made earlier by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. It seems to us particularly important that the European Union has proposed to this Assembly three specific initiatives — in the areas of water, energy and eco-efficiency — designed to improve the pooling of the international community's efforts to implement sustainable development.

In Rio we adopted Agenda 21, and we are determined to implement it fully in its economic, social, environmental and institutional dimensions. This is a difficult task, for the transition to sustainable development will take at least a generation. However, it is an unavoidable task.

We must now take a step forward from Rio by, to give but one example, beginning the process of negotiation for a global convention on forests. This convention should not be solely an instrument to protect forests, but also to ensure their sustainable use.

The major document for the current negotiations determines priorities for the next five years. It provides both a reference framework and an intergovernmental forum to draw up political responses to the structural crisis now being experienced by our generation.

This framework and forum are all the more indispensable because globalization is placing a very important challenge before us. Globalization undoubtedly has advantages, but it is not an end in itself. What is at stake is the well-being of populations. Globalization must therefore be accompanied by social and environmental measures whose very nature will ensure the continued existence of our common heritage. In this connection, Belgium has always worked at both national and international levels to advocate respect for fundamental and environmental norms in international trade and has also supported the International Labour Organization in this area.

However, no country alone can shape this process of economic globalization to make it more respectful of man and his environment. No nation or region of the globe will be able to implement Agenda 21 outside the framework of a global partnership. We must therefore unite our voices, even if our various countries adopt different priorities.

With regard to priorities, I should like here to recall briefly the four major guidelines for sustainable development championed in particular by Belgium, which are more relevant than ever at all levels.

First of all, we are seeking better integration of the work of sustainable development within the formulation of policies by decompartmentalizing environmental, social and economic policies. The environmental plans for our regions are increasingly marked by a cross-sectoral approach. Moreover, the Belgian Government recently adopted a law allowing a systematic integration of actions, principles and objectives of Agenda 21 within all government policies. This process will be supported by the results of an ambitious, multi-year programme of research in sustainable development, also influenced by Agenda 21.

Secondly, in terms of concerted action by society, we, together with the European Union, stress the need to assist major social groups, including non-governmental organizations, in implementing the plan of action for Agenda 21.

Thirdly, we consider the better coordination of policies and measures between neighbouring countries and commercial partners as a *sine qua non* for the achievement of ambitious sustainable-development objectives, in particular the fulfilment of the commitments of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. This involves the orientation of fiscal policies towards favouring fiscal transfers in order to alleviate the cost of labour, while increasing indirect charges for energy. These policies and measures are indispensable if we are really to attain the objectives that we hope the international community reaches in Kyoto. Belgium will firmly support the 15 per cent reduction of emissions from 1990 levels, as proposed by the European Union.

Finally, the fourth major area for follow-up after Rio is international cooperation and a better focusing of development-assistance policies for the development of the least developed countries. Belgium endorses the earliest possible attainment of the objective of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance. In addition, Belgium, sensitive to the deterioration and marginalization of the most vulnerable sectors of the population, is focusing its assistance on human development.

In this context, my country is firmly committed to respecting the objective of 0.15 per cent of gross national product for assistance to the least developed countries, particularly in Africa. These are the countries that need it most. We give particular attention to support for the implementation of social-security systems and the advancement of initiatives for social economy.

The choice of economic, social, institutional and environmental indicators is playing a key role in this entire process. The Commission on Sustainable Development of the United Nations has begun an ambitious project to stimulate an international dialogue on the specific utility of these indicators, thanks to support from Costa Rica and Belgium.

The work of 1997 is helping define the substance of sustainable development. Concepts of good governance, social partnership and respect for human rights are linked to the imperative need to struggle against poverty and the need to change patterns of consumption and production. An agreement on all these subjects will allow us to enter the next century with renewed confidence in our shared future.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium for his statement.

Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Alemán Lacayo (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have come to this forum, where we are brought together by our shared aspirations for humankind, to bring a warm, fraternal greeting and a message of life and hope from the people and the Government of Nicaragua, a small country with barely 4 million inhabitants. It is a country strategically situated on the watershed of the American continent, between North and South, shaped like a narrow waist where the Atlantic and the Pacific embrace. It is a place of encounters, transit and expectations, as well as of ideological and geopolitical confrontations that have profoundly marked its historical destiny.

Nicaragua has firmly set out on a difficult, upward path in order to leave behind a grim past of destruction and violence, which at the end of the 1970s and throughout the past decade reached their most deplorable. Those were harsh years that tore asunder our fragile social and institutional fabric and produced severe economic turmoil together with ruptures of principles and values.

Our differences were magnified and made more destructive by being internationalized and used by adventitious external factors that entered our domestic existence through the two great watersheds of confrontational interests and ideologies, parallel and concurrent; creating a situation in which our sovereignty and ability to manoeuvre were impeded or nullified. The former occurred because the Nicaraguan problem was turned into a substantive part of the internal political agenda of the United States of America; the latter by virtue of our being situated between the powerful and polarizing tensions of East and West.

It was not until 1990 that Nicaragua began a new journey in the patriotic march towards liberty and democracy by electing President Doña Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, who during the precarious transitional period, laid on uncertain terrain the first stones of national harmony and reconstruction, the first stones of an edifice not yet finished, with much remaining to be done. That edifice was almost completely demolished and needed to be supported by the understanding and help of the international community, which was so generous some years ago.

In October 1996, for the second time in a row, the vote of the people reconfirmed their patriotic aspirations and desire to work in peace by freely electing the Government over which I preside and by giving it a mandate to establish a state of law that promotes comprehensive sustainable development with social justice and whose primary objectives are improved standards of living, job creation and the battle against poverty.

We have the political will to fulfil that commitment. We want Nicaragua to be a constant actor for integration and globalization. We want it to be part of the progressive and restorative trends towards a market economy combining the sensitivity and social responsibility that the modernization of the State entails, with the State playing an additional role of guide, promoter and facilitator, and having the responsibility to protect the environment and the ability to govern through lofty, tolerant, flexible and patriotic dialogue.

In this latter connection, when I return to Nicaragua, we will begin as an immediate priority a national dialogue which will enable us to air our problems and differences in order to find definitive and lasting solutions to the most sensitive structural issues of our national life.

Mr. Van Dunem "Mbinda" (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In the framework of this well-defined mission to begin a life in peace — not just among ourselves but also in peace with nature — allow me in my first appearance before the United Nations as the constitutional President of Nicaragua to confirm to the General Assembly our determined commitment to the intensive promotion of sustainable development, as prescribed in Agenda 21,

which was adopted by the United Nations at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

On the fifth of this month, World Environment Day, my Government approved the establishment of the National Council on Sustainable Development (CONADES). This pluralist body, because it is above political differences and potential circumstantial problems, will enjoy the broad-based participation of civil society, including all the main sectors and groups so that together, Government and citizens, we can actively promote the changes and measures to be implemented under Agenda 21.

On that same day — significant in that it marked another positive step to regulate the rational use and preservation of forest resources — I signed the decree that prohibits certain destructive felling practices and the export of our two most precious woods, mahogany and royal cedar, in untreated form.

We will give our enthusiastic support to the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America and join the regional efforts of our brothers and sisters on the isthmus that is our shared continental bridge, unique in the world because of its extraordinary wealth of biological diversity.

We could not continue to stand by and watch as our country was irresponsibly destroyed by the self-destructive process of ecological terrorism that was affecting our finite resources and our habitat, with grave consequences for Nicaraguans of present and future generations.

Briefly, I wish to emphasize that my Government will give special attention to the assessment of the environmental impact of infrastructure projects and public or private investments on problems of pollution, especially with regard to cleaning up Lake Managua. For the initial phase of work, the Inter-American Development Bank, with the cooperation of Germany and the Nordic Development Fund have allocated a sum of $47 million. In addition, the World Bank is very close to formalizing a donation of $7 million, through its provision for financial assistance for Global Environment, for the Atlantic biological-corridor project. Similarly, to provide a framework for our activities, we are planning to update the National Plan for Environmental Action, which was formulated in 1993.

We are concerned by certain conditions we see at the global level. We note that development aid is decreasing and that few countries have met with the objective of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to such assistance. Nor do we see the developed countries fully respecting the commitments they made at the Rio Summit. New resources are not forthcoming. The transfer of clean technologies is minimal. Their production and consumption patterns, which contribute disproportionately to the deterioration of the Earth, have not been significantly modified. The heavy burden of our foreign debt restricts opportunities for investing in the sustainable development of our countries, while the joint initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund could provide relief for poor countries that are deep in debt.

Finally, allow me sincerely to inform the Assembly that I believe that the most effective way to strengthen democracy in my country is to promote the participation of all citizens in the processes provided for in Agenda 21. Only if we can find consensus between the Government and civil society on the most important ideas and actions can we make progress in a world that is changing so much — we are already on the eve of a new century and a new millennium, and still dragging our burdens behind us.

I have faith. I believe in international solidarity, and I am confident that sustainable development focused on helping the women and men of the world, without distinction, to enjoy progress and increasing material and spiritual dignity is the most viable way to build the future and overcome the problems of the present.

The Acting President: I thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for his statement.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jacob Nena, President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Jacob Nena, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted to the rostrum.

President Nena: Five years ago, the delegation of my Government attended the Rio Conference as a new Member of the United Nations. We were, and are, not only a developing country, but a small island developing country. We were greatly inspired by the spirit prevailing at Rio, which seemed to suggest that the global interest in merging environmental and developmental concerns

would serve to cut through the entrenched North-versus-South approach that had so limited the effectiveness of the United Nations. Today, without any intention of demeaning the work that is going on, I would say that the jury is still out as to whether we are really talking about a "new world order" for sustainable development.

Since Rio, virtually the entire United Nations system has been harnessed in the effort to implement Agenda 21, and much has been accomplished. This is due in no small part to the constant leadership of our distinguished President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, starting at Rio, continuing with the Commission on Sustainable Development and now, most fittingly, at this special session. The President has our thanks for his unflagging energy and commitment to this cause.

Also, as this is my first occasion to do so, I would like to extend warm congratulations from the people and the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his election. We are aware of his long service to this Organization and take great encouragement from knowing that the Secretariat is in such experienced hands.

Not only has five years been a relatively short time, in global terms, to implement Rio's broad agenda, but for small island developing States, it was not until two years after Rio that the Barbados Conference provided us with a Programme of Action by which our special development constraints might be addressed and, hopefully, overcome. We commend the Commission on Sustainable Development for its mid-term examination of the Programme, carried out at its fourth session, and anticipate that body's further attention to the matter next year at its sixth session. In particular, we look forward to a special session of this Assembly in 1999 at which a full and comprehensive five-year review of the Programme of Action is to be made. I urge this body to adopt the provisions for that session that are included in the proposed outcome of this session.

I have just come from attending a conference in my capital, where Government officials from all over the Pacific convened to share their experiences and problems in advancing sustainable development. It was enlightening to me, and in many ways encouraging, to hear that such a wide diversity of efforts are under way in our region, in addition to our own efforts in the Federated States of Micronesia. I could take up far more than these short seven minutes outlining what we have tried to do in our own country to address sustainable development during the past five years.

We have convened a National Sustainable Development Commission, which I have chaired in regular sessions. We have adapted our indicative development plans at both state and national levels to incorporate the considerations of an overall national environmental management strategy. We have worked closely with United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and especially with regional and subregional organizations. We have participated to the limits of our capacity as a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Our New York Mission has been assigned the main task of working with the Group of 77 and with the Alliance of Small Island States on Rio-related issues, and of closely following the proceedings of the Governing Council of the Global Environment Facility.

Yet my purpose in speaking here today is to say that, from our perspective, this ship is already in serious danger of wandering off course. I put it to you that, from the limited perspective of a small island developing country, the noble inspiration behind Agenda 21 is in danger of being sucked back into the traditional morass of North-South development issues. We in the Pacific are trying our best to do our part, but we find it extremely difficult to access the support from the developed world that is necessary in order for us to structure our development to make solid progress toward sustainability.

The traditional United Nations system has an answer for that. It is called, "capacity building". But I say today that the intellectual rationale behind this concept has been used, whether intentionally or not, as an excuse to delay direct action, thereby marginalizing many of those whose particular global situations deserve closer and more immediate attention and stronger support. My country's capacity is undeniably lacking, given the tremendous responsibility we bear for the protection of resources, and that should be a global concern. Our approach to sustainable development is severely constrained. But thus far we have had to struggle very hard, not because there is any question about how we fit into the world sustainable development scenario, but from the standpoint of our being a new entrant into the highly competitive international development arena. This does not sound much like Rio; rather, it sounds like business as usual. What does this say about the supposedly noble enterprise that we are all assembled here to celebrate?

I suggest that it basically says to the world establishment that we, along with everybody else, need to look at whether we are really still devoted to the principles of Agenda 21, and whether that Agenda really sufficiently drives us into action-oriented approaches that will secure a sustainable future for all the world's peoples. This is not just an appeal from remote Pacific islands for a bigger slice of the pie. It is an appeal from a small island developing State for this body, on this occasion, to send a strong message to United Nations groups that are approaching major decision-making points, such as those relating to our Earth's atmosphere at Kyoto later this year and in other venues as well, and to take a more urgent approach to the relationship between the environment and development than Agenda 21 seems as yet to have stimulated.

We congratulate the countries of the European Union on their announcement of their willingness to undertake a specific commitment, at the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by 15 per cent against 1990 levels by 2010 as a first step towards reaching the objective of the Convention. This is a positive development. However, given the ever-increasing scientific certainty of the scope of climate change problems, I must point out that an even greater and more near-term commitment is needed. My country stands with many others, including members of the Alliance of Small Island States, in continuing to believe that the so-called Toronto target of 20 per cent reduction by the year 2005 is both necessary and realistic.

We were gratified by the indication from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom today that his country will come significantly closer — even closer than other European Union countries — to meeting the Toronto target. We also hope that by the time of the opening of the Kyoto meeting, the United States will have overcome its reluctance, displayed in Denver last week, to join the European Union countries in making a specific reduction commitment.

Our situation in Micronesia illustrates this urgency. To cite only one example: rising sea levels and more frequent storms have already resulted in salt water inundation of taro patches on our highly populated atoll of Nukuoro, bringing an end to a vital source of local food. Some smaller atolls in Micronesia have already had to be abandoned because of this difficulty. Thus, even island peoples who might seem comfortably removed from many of the Earth's problems have vital stakes in the actions that must be taken by other nations that are primarily responsible for these problems.

The principles of sustainability are not foreign to our Pacific islands. We sustained ourselves for centuries on our islands without thinking much about the modern concept of the environment but that involved a basic respect for the life which supported us. As we take our place in modern society we must employ modern applications, but the fact remains that island peoples of today are often better positioned than most to understand the principles of sustainability. All of you, along with us, as occupants of this planet, must listen to the quiet message that we, as stewards of some the Earth's most vital resources, bring to this debate today. Help us — help all of us, including yourselves — to see that the legacy of Rio is not lost.

The Acting President: I thank the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for his statement.

Mr. Jacob Nena, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Ishembay Abdurazakov, Vice-President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Ishembay Abdurazakov, Vice-President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Abdurazakov (Kyrgyz Republic) (*interpretation from Russian*): Precisely five years have elapsed since the United Nations Conference in Rio, the significance of which is difficult to overestimate. The Conference reaffirmed that socio-economic development and environmental protection are closely interlinked and interdependent. The Conference demonstrated that new global economic threats, damage to the ozone layer, changes in the global climate, deforestation, reduced biodiversity, the contamination of the atmosphere by industrial and radioactive wastes, desertification, the reduction of arable land and other problems have become more acute and that their solution brooks no delay.

It was also important that States participants in the Conference emphasized that a solution to problems of the environment and development requires the establishment of a global partnership on the basis of continued and constructive dialogue.

The five years that have elapsed since the Rio Conference have shown us that, unfortunately, many objectives have not been achieved and many programmes have not been implemented. There are areas, however,

where some progress has been achieved. One such area is addressed in Chapter 13 of Agenda 21: "Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development". It must be noted that, in the field of enhancing awareness of the "mountain agenda", it has been possible to achieve significant progress. This has been helped by international, interregional, subregional and other conferences, seminars and symposia.

I am pleased to note here that one such international conference took place in October 1996 in the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek. In attaching the highest importance to the role of mountains for humanity, the conference proposed that the General Assembly declare an international year of the mountains. This request was supported by the President of our Republic, Mr. Askar Akayev. I should like to voice the hope that this request will meet with a response from Governments, non-governmental organizations, various regional and subregional initiatives and countries parties to the Alpine Convention.

Why is this question so important? Judge for yourselves. Mountains account for one fifth of all dry land. The glaciers on mountain peaks are the most important source of fresh water. A lack of water, along with a lack of other natural resources, leads to increased poverty, the intensification of social discrepancies, the growth of inter-ethnic tensions and, ultimately, the emergence of armed conflicts. It is no coincidence that, of the 48 armed conflicts that took place in 1995, 26 took place in mountain regions.

Mountains are places often fraught with ecological risks and natural disasters. Every year, earthquakes, avalanches, landslides and mud torrents not only do major damage to the economies of mountainous regions, but take thousands of human lives. On the other hand, mountains also provide superb opportunities for the development of tourism, skiing, mountain climbing and hunting.

The "mountain agenda" allowed us significantly to enhance our awareness of vulnerable mountain systems. We believe that the holding, in accordance with the recommendations of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, of an expanded international conference on the question of the sustainable development of mountain regions would promote a more in-depth study and understanding of the entire broad range of issues involved in this problem.

The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic attaches enormous importance to questions of ecology. The President and Government of my country have adopted a new development programme as a guideline, the focus of which is humanity and the natural and social environments that surround it. To live in harmony in nature: this is the task before us. In May this year, a national forum took place in Kyrgyzstan in which the first strategy for sustainable human development in the Commonwealth of Independent States was adopted. The most important elements of the strategy, which was supported by all strata of the population of the Republic, non-governmental organizations and ethnic and religious groups, are overcoming poverty, enhancing the role and position of women in society, and decision-making and environmental protection mechanisms.

We intend to give these documents to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his information. Today, I am gratified to report that, at this time, in parallel to the special session of the General Assembly, preparations are under way in our capital for a meeting of the Security Council of Kyrgyzstan, headed by President Akayev, to consider the entire range of issues linked to ecological security and problems of environmental protection.

Mountains cover 90 per cent of the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Glaciers on the hundreds of thousands of peaks of the Pamir and Tyan Shan ranges give life to the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, the major water arteries of the Aral Sea, the tragedy of which was addressed today by the President of Kazakstan, Mr. Nazarbaev. Possessing enormous water and hydro-energy resources, the mountains of Kyrgyzstan are truly the ecological heart of Central Asia. Each of their heartbeats gives life to the fields, forests and people. If that heart is to continue to beat, however, it needs a cautious attitude to its health. There is a need to draft appropriate legislation and policies to ensure the effective and fair distribution and use of water resources in the Central Asian region. We hope and are sure that considerable assistance to that effect could be rendered by the United Nations.

I should like to draw attention to one further question of great importance to us. On the territory of Kyrgyzstan, there are 28 storage facilities for uranium waste, a legacy from the former Soviet Union. Among the issues connected to radioactive wastes in Chapter 22 of Agenda 21, a major role is accorded to international cooperation, in particular with countries with economies in transition. Here, we would be grateful if the International Atomic Energy Agency were to consider the possibility of including Kyrgyzstan in its ecological restoration programme.

The past five years have been characterized by a deterioration of the global environment and by an exhaustion of natural resources. Does this mean that we need to give up on achieving the objectives of Agenda 21? According to folk wisdom, "He who climbs the mountain will master the road". Only a bold and persistent person conquers mountain peaks, and only persistent joint efforts and the sharing of resources will lead to the implementation of that ambitious Agenda 21 for the twenty-first century, on whose threshold we are standing.

We received a globe from our ancestors, but let us not blame them for the state it is in today. Let us not try to settle scores, because that is pointless. Let us rather try to draw lessons from the past and see to it that each following generation receives from the previous one a healthy, not a deteriorating, environment. They have that right.

It is our duty to show concern for those who come after us. I think that this is a task with which we can cope. It is one with which the international community can cope, and I hope that that will be the case.

The Acting President: I thank His Excellency the Vice-President of the Kyrgyz Republic for his statement.

Mr. Ishembay Abdurazakov, Vice-President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Julia Carabias, Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries of Mexico.

Ms. Julia Carabias, Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries of Mexico, was escorted to the rostrum.

Ms. Carabias (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The principles, commitments and agreements adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as has already been pointed out here in this forum, have not sufficed to curb, much less to reverse, the trends towards deterioration and impoverishment, although they have produced certain advances.

This special session is of great importance because the presence of the Heads of State or Government reaffirms the principles of sustainable development and the commitments of Agenda 21. We are given today a fresh opportunity to reflect, to intensify our efforts and to strengthen commitments.

In the negotiations regarding different aspects of sustainable development, the polarization between the developed and developing countries has remained intact. The former have undertaken binding commitments whose implementation has at times tended to be evaded or postponed, and the latter are experiencing a growing tension due to the scope of the transformation that is required by sustainable development and their limited capacity to accomplish this change.

Mexico reaffirms the value of the principle, recognized at Rio, of common but differentiated responsibility, which we interpret as the obligation of all countries to make the maximum effort at change within the limits of their ability, on the basis of their dynamic environmental, economic and social circumstances.

The developed countries must meet the expectations generated by their capacities and understand that a global transition towards sustainable development will be possible only if they lead the global effort by their example. We were pleased to hear in this forum some developed countries reaffirm their commitments.

Some developing countries, even in the face of limited financial resources, have achieved substantial progress by institutional, legal and regulatory reform, or through a better design and integration of sectoral and trans-sectoral policies. We must continue to take advantage of the enormous transforming power of organizational changes brought about by a genuine openness to social participation, which will allow the mobilization of resources that are currently wasted.

In the United Nations system, while recognizing the advances made, we must identify the major obstacles that stand in the way of smoother progress, starting with insufficient international cooperation, the fragmentation of current agendas and a lack of coordination.

The Economic and Social Council and, more recently, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) have contributed to the coordination of efforts, but a great deal still remains to be done. In practice, the CSD has thus far been able to deal only with forums related to environmental issues, though its mandate includes also the economic and social dimensions. For that reason, CSD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) would seem to have the same sphere of action. And UNEP, which we recognize as the primary global environmental forum, has not been able either to integrate the multiple environmental actions and agendas.

The Conventions have not yet achieved sufficient synergy among themselves and with established programmes and agencies. We have seen gaps in some of the thematic agendas, where the main orientation has been lost; this applies to the Convention on Biological Diversity, where we are not discussing the central issue — *in situ* conservation — enough. Lack of compliance by the developed countries with their commitments further undermines their effectiveness, as we have seen in the case of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We are undoubtedly at the end of a stage in international cooperation that has been characterized by a link between specific issues and ad hoc institutions, between problems and negotiated instruments and between the latter and their respective conferences of the parties. We must promote a new generation of cooperation mechanisms designed with a view to the integration of issues, regionalization and participation.

The CSD must fully integrate social, economic and environmental considerations. UNEP must integrate land-based environmental issues with oceanic and atmospheric issues. These efforts at thematic integration must work in parallel with regionalization, such as those that are already being attempted in certain United Nations bodies — UNEP, for instance. To promote these regional agendas in a comprehensive manner, we need to increase and integrate currently scattered financial resources.

In order to confront this enormous task, there must be increased participation by independent organizations, on the understanding that the achievement of sustainability, both at the national and global levels, is the joint responsibility of Governments and societies.

A revitalized CSD, supported by a strengthened UNEP, that provides follow-up for Agenda 21, avoids duplication of efforts, detects omissions and facilitates dialogue among countries could be the seed and the prototype of the new generation of mechanisms we need in order to encourage sustainable development and contribute to the eradication of poverty.

This determination to integrate, to decentralize and to enhance participation can foster reform in the United Nations system, strengthen its efficiency and overcome years of polarization. But none of this should in any way impede ongoing processes of negotiation. We must on an urgent basis make progress by defining strategies, priorities, specific qualitative or quantitative goals, the necessary resources, time-tables, objective performance indicators, and evaluation and follow-up mechanisms.

In reaffirming its commitments, Mexico also reaffirms its will to progress, together with the international community, towards the fulfilment of the objectives we set for ourselves at that historic gathering in Rio.

The Acting President: I thank Her Excellency the Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries of Mexico for her statement.

Ms. Julia Carabias, Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries of Mexico, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Mehdi Mlika, Minister of the Environment and Land Management of Tunisia.

Mr. Mohamed Mehdi Mlika, Minister of the Environment and Land Management of Tunisia, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Mehdi Mlika (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the President of the Republic of Tunisia.

I have great pleasure in addressing the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on behalf of the Government and the people of Tunisia, and to extend my greetings to the leaders and other high officials of the countries taking part in this session.

As we meet today to evaluate international activities to preserve the environment over the five years since the Rio de Janeiro Conference, we express the hope that this session will lead to the fulfilment of the commitments that were made in this regard. United Nations experts have shown that there is still a wide gap between the discourse of Governments and international institutions regarding the improvement of the world's environment and the realities of our planet Earth, whose condition is daily worsening.

Tunisia has spared no effort to fulfil its responsibilities and thus to make an earnest and effective contribution to preserving the environment on the national, regional and international levels, in conformity with the decisions adopted at the Rio Conference and the provisions of Agenda 21. Our country has ratified all the

international conventions that have been concluded in this sphere, including those that address the prohibition of nuclear testing, the protection of the marine environment from pollution by hydrocarbons, the prohibition of trade in endangered species, and the protection of the Mediterranean and of wetlands. Tunisia has also ratified the Conventions that came out of the Rio Conference on biological diversity and climate change, and the Convention to combat desertification, the enforcement of which is hindered by a lack of financial resources and of suitable mechanisms for cooperation.

We have set up a national commission for sustainable development, grouping all development sectors, and through it we have adopted Tunisia's Local Agenda 21, involving all social partners in this effort and opting for concerted action and national dialogue. This coherent programme is one of the foundations of our country's ninth plan for economic and social development, and confirms the complementarity between national and local efforts in this domain.

We also have particular concern for strengthening specialized environmental protection structures and for enacting relevant laws. We have instituted a Tunisian environmental observatory, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, and have created an Agency for Coastal Development and Protection and an International Centre for Environmental Technology in Tunis, which we intend as a regional centre of influence and an instrument for complementary action among sister countries and other friendly countries.

Our country has introduced the financial and tax incentives necessary to eliminate pollution and to support non-polluting investment, alongside a number of other mechanisms aimed at ensuring an environment that is healthy for economic activity and for life in general. Added to all this is the revision of numerous laws to adapt them to the requirements of sustainable development, and the enactment of new laws, including one creating a national plan for rapid intervention in the event of maritime pollution, and a framework law pertaining to the control, management and disposal of waste.

In June 1993, we called for the holding of a Mediterranean conference on sustainable development and for the drafting of a Mediterranean Agenda 21. The Euro-Mediterranean conference of ministers held at Tunis in this framework made it possible to prepare a Mediterranean Agenda 21 and to set up a Mediterranean commission for sustainable development, providing an opportunity to revise the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution, and to develop a regional action plan.

Tunisia is working resolutely for the establishment of active solidarity among the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean and the European Union to protect the natural environment and to ensure that those living in this region of the world enjoy the conditions needed for a better quality of life.

The right to a healthy environment is a fundamental human right on the basis of which we in Tunisia have built our plan for society and our political programme. For this reason we are eager to use all the means and skills at our disposal to support international efforts in this regard, for it is certain that success cannot be achieved without unified cooperation among States. Nor can it be attained without the active contribution of the affluent countries.

It is our hope that this special session will be the occasion for a more thorough study of the practical means and mechanisms for revitalizing effective partnership and for mobilizing new financial resources to support programmes of sustainable development in developing countries, in accordance with the commitments made at the Rio summit, particularly with respect to the official development assistance that should be provided to the less developed countries and to those with medium-level revenues. While stressing this point, we also emphasize the need promote partnership in scientific research and the transfer of the latest environmental technology, so as to strengthen the capabilities of the developing countries in this vital sphere.

To address the problem of the indebtedness of developing countries is to contribute to strengthening the effort for environmental protection. We have underscored this in our appeal to the wealthy countries to recycle the debt into financing projects for environmental protection, with the objective of promoting sustainable development in various regions.

We take this opportunity to thank the Governments of Sweden and of the Netherlands for responding favourably to Tunisia's appeal regarding recycling of the debt. We wish also to thank the Government of Germany for its major participation in financing environmental projects in my country. This has opened the way for international solidarity and partnership in favour of the

environment. It is our hope that the other affluent countries will do the same.

We reaffirm here our view that action for a healthy environment is an essential duty for all, a duty which is imposed by the interaction of the individual and the universe and which places the human being above all other creatures. We wish this session every success in advancing the international community's progress in this field.

The Acting President: I thank His Excellency the Minister of the Environment and Land Management of Tunisia for his statement.

Mr. Mohamed Mehdi Mlika, Minister of the Environment and Land Management of Tunisia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Cielito F. Habito, Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Cielito F. Habito, Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning of the Philippines, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Habito (Philippines): In September 1992, barely two months after the historic Earth Summit in Rio, the then newly elected Philippine President, Fidel V. Ramos, created the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development, thereby delivering the swiftest response by any country to the call made in Rio for States to set up a national coordination structure responsible for the follow up of Agenda 21.

Less than four years later, in May 1996, *Newsweek* magazine referred to the Philippines as an emerging "green tiger", at a time when the country was being held up consistently in many international circles as an example, as a leader, in the pursuit of sustainable development.

Allow me to share some of the reasons why we may have merited such recognition.

Today, five years after Rio, the Philippines is one among only a small number of countries with a genuine multi-stakeholder council for sustainable development, a council that asserts full partnership between government and civil society. The initial years were not easy. The road we took was a tortuous, sometimes frustrating one that seemed overly dominated by organizational and operational concerns.

We took time to achieve a levelling of perspectives, paradigms, expectations and mindsets among the governmental members and the civil society members of the council. Indeed, the gap between us at the outset was rather wide. Our first order of business was to instil in ourselves trust in each other and, in turn, to work to merit each other's trust. We spent time agreeing on protocols for agenda setting and decision-making, until we finally agreed to be guided by the principles of counter-parting and consensus-building in all that we work on.

We gave time to forging mechanisms for funding our sustainable development efforts, and in the process made history by putting in place the first World Bank project that provided resources directly to our non-governmental organizations working to protect Philippine natural resources. It turned out to have been time well spent. These initial preoccupations did not prevent us from proceeding with the real work that had to be done right on the ground.

We improved the policy and regulatory framework for the environmental impact assessment and environmental clearance system in our country. We undertook environmental and natural resource accounting and adopted it officially as part of our system of national accounts, one of the first countries in the world to do so.

We formulated our own Philippine Agenda 21, formally adopted in September 1996, and put in place the regional and local counterparts of the national council and the national agenda on sustainable development.

Through all these measures, our people at the grass roots worked to bring meaning to the now almost trite phrase "think globally, act locally". In our island province of Palawan, for example, the programme *Bantay Puerto*, loosely translated as "Guardians of the City", was put up and involved the city government and the citizens working together to guard the sea, the coast and the forest against pollution and environmental degradation. In the San Miguel Corporation, the country's largest food conglomerate, unionists incorporated environmental responsibilities into their collective bargaining agreements between labour and management.

In the meanwhile, much was happening on the economic front. The strategy of President Ramos to open up the economy and maximize competition unleashed a new dynamism in the national economy, manifested in the consistently accelerating growth of the Philippine gross domestic product for six years now, even as the growth

of our dynamic neighbours in south-east Asia has begun to slow down.

Even so, our growth strides are being taken in measured steps, for even as we welcomed unprecedented interest from both domestic and foreign investors, we turned away some investments and shut down some ongoing production facilities for the sake of safeguarding the environment. Even as we lined up new and strategic infrastructure projects, we held in abeyance a good number of them, in the process incurring criticism for slowness or delays, until we were convinced that we were keeping things clean as we grow. We do not want to follow the grow now/clean up later formula seemingly taken by others who preceded us, including the so-called "economic tigers".

Those of us who share the sustainable development philosophy understand that we prefer to proceed with caution and moderation, and that we are trying to nurture a young tiger in the woods and are committed to preserving the health of the woods in which this tiger is growing.

I say all this about our national efforts not to flatter ourselves in this forum, nor to solicit premature praises for our country, for we will be the first to admit that there remains much more to be done and that the state of our environment still leaves a great deal to be desired. We share with you our experiences today because we feel that there is much that the rest of the world may learn from them.

Sustainable development is not something that Governments or international bodies do to people. Sustainable development is something people do for themselves and for their children. It is not something that a Government can accomplish alone, nor is it something that civil society can achieve in spite of the Government. Sustainable development is something that can only be achieved through the Government and civil society working together, not just in consultation with each other, but in a real working partnership. The first step, as I emphasized at the outset, is to have trust; and not only that, but for both parties to work to merit each other's trust.

In the various conferences that came after the Rio Earth Summit, we have witnessed the reluctance of some Governments to ascribe a partnership role to civil society. In the Rio + 5 meeting just a few months ago, which was dominated by representatives of civil society, we witnessed persistent government-bashing from the speakers in that forum.

Many concrete recommendations have been made before this and similar forums in the five years since the Rio Earth Summit. Most of them, including those made in Rio itself, remain just that, mere recommendations. We submit that, unless Governments decide to work directly and together with civil society, and unless civil society decides to engage Governments as partners in this endeavour, little, if any, progress will be made on Agenda 21.

For Governments, the first step is to extend sincerely an open hand. For civil society, in turn, it is to take hold sincerely of that hand. Without this partnership any effort towards sustainable development simply cannot be sustained and will eventually fail.

We are proud that we are making this partnership work in the Philippines for the sake of sustainable development. This is the new Asian miracle that the Philippines would like to share with the world.

The Acting President: I thank the Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning and Director-General of the National Development Authority of the Philippines, for his statement.

Mr. Cielito F. Habito, Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning and Director-General of the National Development Authority of the Philippines, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear now a statement by His Excellency Mr. Pierre Schori, Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden.

Mr. Pierre Schori, Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Schori (Sweden): All over the world millions of people give substance to the concept of sustainable development. An unprecedented world-wide effort from civil society drives the Rio process forward. This places a heavy obligation on the Governments present here today.

Twenty-five years after Stockholm, ten years after the Brundtland Commission and five years after Rio, we are far from having secured sustainable development. Yet, never before have so many people taken the step out of poverty. Never before have so many taken control of their

lives. Never before have so many nations made such progress towards establishing democratic cultures. Therein lies our hope.

But never before have so many children been born into poverty. Never before have inequalities been so glaring between and within nations. Therein lies our challenge.

In my country, all 288 municipalities are working on local Agenda 21 plans. From children in schools to public and private sectors of community life, everyone is involved.

As a gift from the Swedish Agenda 21 Netwo k, we would like to offer the United Nations a symbol of our commitment bearing the names of all the Swedish municipalities.

This spring the Government of Sweden launched a comprehensive programme to support sustainable investments and technical development in Sweden. We also expect this to create new jobs, support economic growth and improve the competitiveness of Swedish business.

An improved environment and sustainable development are also regional issues. The Governments of the countries around the Baltic Sea, not so long ago locked in sterile confrontation on either side of the Iron Curtain, have now launched a project that will soon result in a regional Agenda 21 — the Baltic 21.

Poverty is the main enemy of peace and development today. Liberation from poverty can only be the work of the poor themselves. But the struggle of poor people and developing nations must be supported by a strong international system, with a renewed United Nations at the centre and with new and additional resources at its disposal.

Today, we are further away from the 0.7 per cent target than ever. Global trade and private investment flows cannot, on their own, achieve a stable world. Development assistance can never, on its own, be the full answer, but all experience shows that in the right environment, it is indispensable.

Now tha' Sweden's public finances are in shape again, the Government has decided to increase our aid above the 0.7 per cent level.

To further spearhead work to the benefit of the least developed countries in the field of fresh water and energy, Sweden will set aside another $10 million, with a special focus on women.

Military activities, as we know, cause environmental degradation, both in peace and in war. Sweden would like to see a more thorough follow-up by responsible authorities in accordance with decisions taken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, for instance, by developing environmental plans for national defence, as we do in Sweden.

Consumption and production must be sustainable. The industrialized countries have a clear responsibility and must take the lead. Greater use of economic instruments can enable us to improve eco-efficiency. This goes for everything — from cans to cars, from radios to refrigerators. In the long run, we need to make the use of energy and resources 10 times more efficient than today for the same volume of production. This is the vision of the "Factor 10" initiative.

We will not succeed in the tasks that we set ourselves at the Earth Summit in Rio unless we radically improve the way we cooperate in the world.

The coming millennium milestone offers a unique opportunity. Sweden therefore asks the Secretary-General to elaborate a report with respect to strategies for a sustainable future. In preparing such a document, contributions from all parts of society and the international system should be sought, including civil society, business and the academic world. This report would be considered at the highest possible level by the General Assembly in the year 2000.

It is today that we must find solutions for coming generations.

The Acting President: I thank the Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden for his statement.

Mr. Pierre Schori, Deputy Foreign Minister and Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Senator The Honourable Robert Hill, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for the Environment of Australia.

Senator The Honourable Robert Hill, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for the Environment of Australia, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Five years on from Rio, this special session of the United Nations General Assembly is an opportunity to evaluate frankly how effective we have been in implementing sustainable-development principles.

An honest evaluation of our performance will recognize that progress has been inadequate in several key areas. Poverty in the least developed world continues to be the greatest challenge to sustainable development. We have lost a further 3.5 per cent of our forests. Desertification continues at an alarming rate. Pollution of our air and our freshwater and ocean resources has increased, and we are struggling to protect biodiversity in the face of a potential wave of extinctions of species.

However, the significance of having achieved international consensus on the broad principles of sustainable development and on the need for action should not be understated. Nor should we fail to recognize the enormous changes that are occurring: the extent to which sustainable development principles have been incorporated into government and agency decision-making processes and the practical improvements in environmental, social and economic conditions this has brought in many countries.

Unfortunately, these successes have been partial and limited. Overall, we have not yet been able adequately to translate the conceptual framework into the necessary outcomes on the ground.

In Australia, we have recognized the need for action and have commenced implementation of a historic national programme to promote sustainable development. We have established a fund with 1.2 billion Australian dollars, which is the largest reinvestment in the environment in our country's history. The complementary goals of the Natural Heritage Trust, as we call it, are to protect Australia's biodiversity and ensure sustainable use of our land and waters.

However, action at the national level is a necessary but not sufficient condition for sustainable development. All of our futures are bound together, and it is only with a common will, with a common purpose and through common action that, together, we can secure a prosperous and sustainable future for our children and their children.

Australia recognizes that the action which must be taken to achieve sustainable development will require a significant investment. Aid has an important role to play in supporting national actions to alleviate poverty and implement sustainable development. However,it must also act as a catalyst to help nations adopt economic and social policies that facilitate private investment and trade flows. Social stability rooted in democratic freedoms and sound governance is also critical to the confidence that underpins investment in physical and human capital. These are the long-term building blocks of sustainable development.

The role of economic policy is also particularly important in promoting sustainable development. Greater reliance must be placed on economic instruments and policies that internalize environmental costs and discourage unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

I wanted to deal with a few of the very topical and important issues, and the first is climate change.

We have a responsibility to provide an effective, durable and truly global response to this significant issue. We must move beyond words to produce an agreement which is realistic, fair and achievable. In Australia's view, an agreement needs to meet these three criteria if it is to deliver environmentally effective outcomes.

A regime under which emission-reduction targets are unattainable or under which individuals in different nations are asked to make dramatically different sacrifices is likely to be both unfair and ineffective. Flat-rate targets would place unfair burdens on a number of countries, including Australia. Similarly, Australia believes that agreeing to legally binding targets before their nature and content are clear would be premature.

My Government's view is that an effective agreement on climate change would be given practical expression through differentiation of country commitments. The Kyoto agreement must provide that each country's particular circumstances, economic costs and available opportunities to limit emissions be taken into account in determining an equitable target for each participating State.

Australia is working actively and constructively in the negotiations. We have submitted proposals for differentiating greenhouse-gas-emission targets to ensure there is an equality of effort between Annex I countries.

We are seeking an outcome under which each country will be able to contribute to the fight against global warming in a way which is fair and effective and realistically takes national circumstances into account.

Secondly, promoting the sustainable use of forest resources and the conservation of forests — especially forest biodiversity — must be a major priority over the next five years. We are not yet convinced that a convention is required. At this stage, we would prefer urgent implementation of the indicative planning figure recommendations, which would produce positive outcomes. Australia supports the establishment of a high-level intergovernmental forum to implement the proposals of the indicative planning figure. Such a forum could also consider the need for a convention in due course.

Thirdly, the need to achieve sustainable use of our ocean resources is also a key priority. At present, management of ocean resources is characterized by a fragmented and inefficient approach. There is a desperate need for greater coordination of the instruments and institutions dealing with the management of our oceans. Management arrangements with a regional focus should be encouraged. Australia is currently hosting the secretariat for the International Coral Reef Initiative, and is playing a major role in other forums designed to promote the protection and sustainable use of ocean resources in our region.

We have also commenced the development of a national oceans policy, which will provide a framework for the management of Australia's fisheries, shipping, petroleum, gas and seabed resources. It will do this in a way that will not only conserve and protect our marine environment, but also allow us to derive sustainable economic benefits from our oceans. We would urge all national Governments to look at developing similar marine or ocean policies in accordance with their particular circumstances.

Fourthly, a dramatic improvement in our management of fresh water is essential in order to sustain human populations and the ecological systems so critical to life on our planet. Effective international action and, especially, regional action are required, in particular to promote integrated catchment management for river systems covering several jurisdictions. As the only country in the world with exclusive responsibility for the freshwater resources of an entire continent, and as the driest inhabited continent, Australia understands the vulnerability of environmental flows. We have learned the painful lessons about the need to manage freshwater resources sustainably. Ironically, our past mistakes put us in a good position to provide water technology and catchment management expertise to help other nations address freshwater issues.

Fifthly and lastly, with regard to sustainable cities, one thing we have learnt is that close cooperation between national and municipal government is critical to successfully translating national environmental policies into action, particularly on the ground. Earlier this month, Australia was proud to host the "Pathways to Sustainability" conference, which focused on the global progress of municipal governments in implementing local Agenda 21 programmes and brought together many international leaders in local sustainable development. The outcomes of that conference are reflected in the Newcastle Declaration, named after the Australian city where the conference took place.

I commend to the General Assembly the general thrust of the Declaration, and hope that international organizations and national Governments will in future work more effectively with municipal government to deliver sustainable outcomes at a community level. If they do so, we will be making major strides in the challenge of achieving sustainable cities.

The Rio Conference was a turning point in the agenda of international cooperation. Sustainable development is now one of the dominant issues for the international community, alongside such long-established concerns as global security, human rights and international trade. Now is the time for decisive action. The emphasis must shift from process to outcome. The conceptual framework now needs to be translated into practical implementation of sustainable development. With this in mind, Australia reaffirms its commitment to the principles established at Rio and signals its continued determination to contribute to the realization of sustainable development.

The Acting President: I thank Senator The Honourable Robert Hill, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for the Environment of Australia for his statement.

Senator The Honourable Robert Hill, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for the Environment of Australia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Luciano Ciavatta, Minister for Territory, the Environment and Agriculture of San Marino.

Mr. Luciano Ciavatta, Minister for Territory, the Environment and Agriculture of San Marino was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Ciavatta (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation*): On this significant occasion, the Republic of San Marino wishes to reiterate its full commitment to the principles spelt out at the World Summit on environment and development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. We believe that that was a historic event.

That event saw the establishment of the new global cooperation among States, brought together by the common objective of paving the way to sustainable development, in which environmental protection and long-term socio-economic development are to be considered compatible, complementary and interdependent. The solution to environmental issues demands resources that only economic development can supply, since socio-economic growth is bound to decline if the well-being of humankind and natural resources are severely damaged by environmental degradation.

The initiatives undertaken, and the results of the 1972 Stockholm Conference, where the concept of sustainable development was first introduced, and of the 1992 Rio Conference, represent significant achievements worldwide. Our endeavours, however, need further strengthening in the future. Today, the international community, national organizations, the industrial and economic world and individuals are more aware of and willing to participate in environmental activities. At the same time, it has become apparent that society and the economy cannot thrive in a world stricken by poverty and degradation.

In many instances, world leaders shared the view that market globalization, economic growth and the needs of modern society must take into account the environmental constraints which are the basis of our ecosystem. Halting human development is inconceivable, but development must be less destructive and more responsible. The main cause of increased environmental degradation can be ascribed to unacceptable production and consumption patterns. Hence, it is imperative to give new life to the concept of new production modes, reducing the exploitation of natural resources, the production of toxic waste and pollution. Meeting the needs of present generations must not damage opportunities for future generations.

Unfortunately, the situation is quite different. In many regions of the world, poverty and hunger are worsening, the gulf between rich and poor nations is widening, and environmental degradation and depletion of resources are almost beyond repair. Our task here in New York is to assess carefully the implementation stage of the commitments undertaken in Rio and above all, I believe, to act in such a way as to reconcile future economic development, social justice and the preservation of nature.

The Government I represent reaffirms today the viability of the important documents adopted in Rio. The Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 and the statement on forest principles call for action and are of vital importance now more than ever.

Despite its limited territorial size of only a few square kilometres and its limited impact on the world economy, San Marino is well aware of the threats and repercussions of the damage caused to our common ecosystem and intends to share its experience with larger countries.

On behalf of my Government, I am proud to affirm that the population of San Marino has become more sensitive to environmental issues. Our real economy is well developed and many of the problems affecting other populations in the world have been tackled and overcome, while many of the local commitments of Agenda 21 are being considered.

The small size of the country allows close relations between the community and its institutions — a key element for promoting the debate on environmental issues and increasing participation by all groups of society. The Government has adopted significant measures with regard to urbanization and ecology and is making greater efforts to integrate environmental considerations into the formulation of its policies in the light of its characteristics and the quality of life of its inhabitants. In particular, the Framework Law for the Protection of the Environment and the Safeguarding of the Landscape, whose aim is to enhance the cultural and natural landscape of the Republic, has proven to be important.

For the purpose of educating the population on environmental themes, the Government is defining a project for environmental protection and safeguarding the territory through the involvement of students of all levels. The intention is to teach younger generations how to exploit natural resources in a responsible and rational way and to show them the correct mechanisms regulating the relationship between man and nature. Under this project, pupils and students are to carry out regular surveys during the school year in order to assess the environmental quality of the green areas.

On this occasion, I wish to stress, as stated in Agenda 21, the fundamental nature of active cooperation with non-governmental organizations, represented in San Marino by associations and committees for the protection of environment. Besides guaranteeing the dissemination of information, monitoring the activity of the Government in this field and contributing to educational projects, these groups should be reliable counterparts of the official institutions. The ultimate objective is for the various socio-economic sectors to accept the principle of interdependence which underlies the concept of sustainable development.

As I have already said, San Marino is a small State proud of its long-standing traditions of solidarity, freedom and democracy. The themes addressed in Agenda 21 emphasize these same values and show a common will and shared determination. San Marino intends to play its role in the implementation of this far-reaching plan, prompted by the conviction that it will ultimately lead to the achievement of global democracy.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister for Territory, the Environment and Agriculture of San Marino for his statement.

Mr. Luciano Ciavatta, Minister for Territory, the Environment and Agriculture of San Marino, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Song Jian, State Counsellor of China.

Mr. Song Jian, State Counsellor of China, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Song Jian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Five years after the Rio Earth Summit, it is very important and significant that leaders from all over the world or meeting once again to review the past and plan for the future. The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the issue of environment and development. Since the early 1980s, China has made environmental protection one of its basic State policies. With a high sense of responsibility to future generations and the international community, China has earnestly honoured the commitments solemnly made with other countries at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

I am glad to report to this Assembly that, while registering rapid economic growth in recent years, China has avoided drastic environmental degradation and even registered some partial improvement in the nation's environment. Following UNCED's lead, China formulated its own Agenda 21 — the White Paper on China's Population, Environment and Development in the Twenty-First Century — and has incorporated the strategy of sustainable development into its National Economic and Social Development Programme. It has encouraged extensive public participation, set up a mechanism of institutional guarantees, engaged extensively in international cooperation, and made notable progress in environmental protection as well as in economic and social development.

In recent years, China's gross national product has been growing at a relatively high annual rate and the sector of the population living in poverty has declined from 80 million in the early 1990s to 58 million at present. Rapid population growth has been brought under control and the nation's natural population growth rate has dropped steadily.

Notable achievements have been made in the comprehensive exploitation of resources by promoting their conservation and relying on scientific and technological progress. Efforts have been made to promote clean production processes and the transformation of the industrial growth mode. The increase in discharged pollutants has been effectively curbed by the shut-down of more than 60,000 enterprises causing serious pollution.

More attention has been paid to forest cultivation and the nationwide voluntary reforestation drive. Forest coverage has increased steadily. Greater efforts have been devoted to preserving biodiversity. A network of nature reserves has taken basic shape, covering 7.2 per cent of China's land territory. Most of the endangered species are being effectively protected.

These goals were achieved independently by the Chinese people and Government, mainly through their own efforts. China's active participation in international cooperation and its efforts to seek international support also played an important part in this process.

Though we are keenly aware that China still faces formidable challenges in achieving sustainable development, we are convinced that if all the Chinese people work hard together, implement decisively a sustainable development strategy and participate actively in international cooperation, we can continue the sustainable development of our national economy, provide adequate food and clothing for the poor and achieve zero population growth by the year 2030, all the while doing a good job of protecting the environment. China will contribute significantly to global environmental protection and economic development through the smooth functioning of its own affairs.

Five years ago, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) adopted for the first time a programme of sustainable development and affirmed the principles governing international environment and development cooperation. These represent the indelible contribution made by UNCED in Rio.

In the past five years, the international community has logged notable achievements in implementing the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21. The concept of sustainable development has begun to take root in people's minds and has become the guiding principle for countries in the formulation of their development strategies. The developing countries have overcome difficulties and worked very hard to make some progress, and the international community has carried out some useful experiments on financing mechanisms in an effort to explore and broaden new avenues to make such cooperation multi-channelled and rich in content.

However, there remains a considerable gap between what has been done and what remains to be done. One important condition for progress in international environment and development cooperation is the provision of financial resources and the transfer of technology to developing countries. But the percentage of gross national product that the developed world is allocating to official development assistance has dropped to its lowest level in 25 years. Moreover, some developed countries are engaging in trade protectionism under the pretext of environmental protection, which has a negative impact on the sustainable development of developing countries.

In the course of implementing Agenda 21, new imbalances have emerged. More emphasis is being placed on the environment and less on development; sectoral rather than cross-sectoral issues are being stressed; and international cooperation is insufficient. We believe that the full implementation of the concept of protecting the environment in the course of development and the closing of the gap between words and deeds should be the theme of this special session, as well as the key to promoting an international environment and development cooperation geared towards the twenty-first century.

Poverty and backwardness constitute one of the major obstacles to sustainable development. It will be an arduous task for developing countries to eliminate poverty so as to realize their right to development while protecting the environment. To help them to achieve this objective is the key to sustainable development for humankind in the twenty-first century.

The current situation requires that we apply greater determination and broaden our horizons. We must actively participate in international cooperation without focusing only on immediate interests. To this end, the Chinese delegation would like to put forward the following proposals.

First, vigorously to promote scientific and technological cooperation in the realm of the environment and development. Science and technology, as a common asset of humankind, form the very basis for improving patterns of production and consumption and for achieving sustainable development. Developed countries have the capability and historical responsibility — which cannot be shirked — to share with developing countries the achievements of this latest scientific and technological revolution.

Secondly, to enable, in accordance with the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, the developing countries to enhance their national capabilities. Advances in the developing countries will make possible further progress in developed countries. The important issue is to overcome various forms of trade protectionism.

Thirdly, to reverse the trend of a sharp decrease in development funding for developing countries. Adequate financial resources are a necessary condition for improving humankind's ability to implement Agenda 21. We hope that the developed countries will take action to fulfil the commitments they made at Rio.

Finally, of course, developing countries should fully tap their own potential. They cannot and should not follow the same old development patterns of "pollution first and treatment later", but rather take the road of sustainable development right from the beginning.

We have come together for the common benefit of humankind and to build and protect our common home. Our objective is to achieve global sustainable development in the twenty-first century. To strengthen cooperation is the only way to fulfil this historic mission. This requires a close integration of development and environment issues; full consideration of the specific needs of developing countries; and the implementation of common but differentiated responsibilities. This also calls for joint efforts to establish a new global partnership, overcome difficulties and achieve sustainable development. So long as we work together, our future is bright.

The Acting President: I thank His Excellency the State Counsellor of China for his statement.

Mr. Song Jian, State Counsellor of China, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Juan Gabito-Zóboli, Vice-Minister of the Environment of Uruguay.

Mr. Juan Gabito-Zóboli, Vice-Minister of the Environment of Uruguay, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Gabito-Zóboli (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the people and Government of Uruguay, we would like to convey our best wishes to the leaders and delegations present here. We wish also to express our satisfaction at the convening of this session in the framework of the most highly representative international political forum, the General Assembly of the United Nations.

On various occasions, and in particular during the most recent session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held last April, we have reported on the progress achieved by our country since 1992 and on how Uruguay has implemented the Rio de Janeiro commitments in the environmental and social fields. For this reason, we will now focus on a few issues related to the global situation and on the most striking aspects of humankind's successes and failures on the road to sustainable development.

It is clear that in these five years, information, sensitivity and awareness with respect to environmental issues have increased in all areas — within the family, in business, in academic and political circles. This item has been definitively placed on our agenda and included in our plans on a priority basis.

It is noteworthy, for instance, that the requirements of environmental management have been broadly felt in the area of trade, such as through the ISO 14000 norms, and that the Olympic movement, with its strict human values, has also decided to take the environment as the third dimension of its Games, together with sports and culture.

Nonetheless, according to all the assessments that have been made and the reports of different specialized agencies, the efforts deployed have not yet been sufficient to have a clear impact on negative trends at a global level as regards climate change, the depletion or deterioration of natural resources — in particular of drinking water — and the loss of biodiversity.

This situation has complex, long-standing causes, but, paradoxically, the social models and models of production that continue to put irrational pressure on our countries' capacity for environmental conservation and the sustainability of our world remain intact. The greatest responsibility for this situation does not lie with the economic models promoted by the developing countries in response to the need to meet the growing requirements of their peoples, but rather with the patterns of consumption of developed societies, which have not been able to adapt to a world that by definition is finite and interdependent.

We recognize in particular the environmental value of peace, and we appreciate as positive the trend towards denuclearization, disarmament, mine clearance and the settlement of conflicts, which we owe to the efforts of the United Nations and of the countries of greatest military might. War is the greatest and most imminent threat to human beings and to the environment.

But while we must commend this change, which is not yet definitive, we must al[illegible]sk ourselves how much longer humankind will be ab[illegible]o enjoy peace without tackling the social imbalances that lead to the depletion of the world's resources, which sustain that peace.

Contrary to all expectations, there has been no significant redirection of the technical, material and

financial resources previously allocated to the military towards peaceful purposes, particularly in the research and development of new, ecologically sound processes and products.

We also see as positive the worldwide trend that is in evidence in many developing countries, including my own, towards sound, growing economies: we can observe a parallel between macroeconomic policies and the capacity to develop and invest with a view to caring for the environment.

Yet we must also be aware that there are profound social imbalances that are growing worse in many regions and whose solution is our primary responsibility as leaders. It is impossible to divorce the struggle for environmental protection from our imperative struggle against poverty and social marginalization. Manifestations of extreme poverty and lack of opportunity must be resolved, first and foremost because of the ethical imperative to which we are committed, and secondly because no programme of environmental protection can be viable so long as social disintegration persists.

We therefore stress the need for a comprehensive interpretation and implementation of the concept of sustainable development, since we must go beyond the persistent conflict between conservation and development. We must find a way to generate the well-being and human dignity that our peoples require and at the same time to maintain the balance and other conditions needed to renew life on Earth.

In their quest for this kind of development, countries have to be aware of the regional impact of their endeavours insofar as these may affect shared ecosystems. They must also take into account the principle of the international legal responsibility of States for activities that could have a negative impact on third countries, such as the transboundary transport of hazardous waste, radioactive waste in particular.

Available knowledge has already identified the causes and has pointed the way. The potential of technology holds out hope for viable solutions. It is necessary to reaffirm the individual and collective political will to commit ourselves to global strategies that can provide due continuity and can have a significant impact in the medium term.

In this context, a palpable increase in effective North-South cooperation becomes ever more essential as an element to help us attain our shared objectives. Likewise, there must be higher levels of commitment in South-South cooperation. We are therefore concerned at non-compliance with the commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of economically strong countries to programmes in developing countries or areas that are of environmental interest and that would benefit the entire system. This calls into question the real force of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, a principle that Uruguay endorses once again today.

We are also concerned about uncertainty surrounding the fulfilment of goals for the reduction of greenhouse gases by the year 2000 and the setting of new goals for the year 2010. This is a basic responsibility of the industrialized countries and an objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; there has been no significant progress towards this objective.

As Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean observed last year at Buenos Aires, we must achieve effective coordination of the various instruments that emerged from the 1992 Conference and must make optimal use of the relevant resources. We hope that this will be achieved, under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme, in the framework of the process of restructuring the United Nations system.

Uruguay continues to implement policies aimed at enhancing its status as a "natural country". We are confident that the evolution of the system of multilateral trade will give due priority to the value of products that are natural and that are produced at minimal environmental cost.

Finally, we reiterate that these aspirations can be realized only under political regimes that guarantee democracy and the full enjoyment of the rights of the individual and of society. The fundamental human right to enjoy the benefits of nature should be exercised in a way that is fair, widespread and united, and should be guaranteed to future generations as well.

The Acting President: I thank the Vice-Minister of the Environment of Uruguay for his statement.

Mr. Juan Gabito-Zóboli, Vice-Minister of the Environment of Uruguay, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Utula U. Samana, CMG, Chairman of the Delegation of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Utula U. Samana, CMG, Chairman of the Delegation of Papua New Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Samana (Papua New Guinea): I am greatly honoured to address this important session of the General Assembly as the special envoy of the Government of Papua New Guinea.

The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, on environment and development, provides yet again an opportunity for the world community to strive towards the rebuilding of the spirit of Rio, and to regain confidence in addressing the pitfalls of the implementation of Agenda 21. At this decisive moment of history, we are further challenged to maintain the spirit of partnership that evolved from Rio, to adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and to continue to take firm and responsible actions aimed at reducing unsustainable consumption and production, at decelerating environmental degradation, at alleviating poverty and at restoring the critical balance of the global environment, upon which the livelihood of the whole of humanity depends.

I regret to state, however, that the review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 raises serious doubts about our ability to work as partners in fulfilling the expectations and the goals of sustainable development and in carrying out the related programmes since the Earth Summit in Rio. The spirit of partnership forged five years ago and the objectives and goals of Agenda 21 continue to be undermined by myopic political vision and unilateral decisions.

It is alarming to note that the global environment outlook, as presented to us by the leading international authorities, looks gloomy. The dangers of continued industrial pollution, the impact of globalization, the unsustainable consumption and production patterns of the industrialized countries and the declining levels of official development assistance continue to hinder progress at the practical level. This gathering provides an opportunity for much-needed confidence-building.

Despite its limited resources, my Government has taken considerable steps in the face of rising demands to determine national policies and programmes to guide and encourage all sectors of the community to value the importance of taking responsible decisions towards sustainable use and management of our natural resources within the context of achieving sustainable development. Guided and encouraged by the collective spirit of Rio, we have endeavoured to live up to the requirements and objectives of Agenda 21 at the local and regional levels, where we have been able to do so.

For instance, Papua New Guinea has moved to ban the transportation of hazardous and toxic wastes in the Pacific region. We have adopted stringent conservation and management policies for our exclusive economic zones and the marine environment. We have enacted laws to comply with international standards, where possible, including environmental impact assessments and environmental impact plans. With other Melanesian States of the South Pacific, we also took a bold move and adopted a code of conduct for the management of our sovereign rainforests.

Our regional initiatives include a comprehensive approach to addressing environmental concerns with respect to oceans and coastal management. In this context, we call upon all States to join us in our efforts to keep the Pacific free from nuclear activities. We also recognize and support the call by small island developing States for assistance in the clean-up of radioactive waste left from colonial legacies, including further research on the impact of radioactive materials on human health, and for the restoration of lands and indigenous peoples affected by those activities.

As a member of the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS), we are concerned at the lack of progress on the whole issue of climate change and at the interests of a particular industry opposing further action to solve the real danger of global warming and sea-level rise. Activities that pose serious dangers to the global atmosphere and contribute to sea-level rise that directly threatens the very existence of peoples throughout the world should invoke our human conscience to take precautionary measures to ensure our own protection and the collective survival of the entire world. In this connection, we firmly stand by the AOSIS protocol for further reductions in carbon and greenhouse gas emissions.

Papua New Guinea is a State party to numerous post-Rio international instruments and agreements dedicated to the conservation and management of resources and the environment, such as the agreement relating to straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish

stocks, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. International law will continue to play a major role in the future and we are grateful for the work done by the United Nations Environment Programme in this field. We believe that there needs to be further progress in areas that have not been adequately addressed in the past five years, taking into account fundamental principles such as prior notification and the precautionary principle as guiding principles for future international cooperation.

We will continue our commitments to encourage local authorities, traditional landowners, community elders, women, youths, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to take responsible actions in the implementation of the goals and objectives of Agenda 21.

To enhance our efforts, we will require much needed international financial and technological assistance. These are two of the most critical issues that the special session has highlighted. My delegation strongly supports the views expressed by some that political will must be demonstrated unconditionally and in the true spirit of partnership in the areas of technology transfer and provision of new and additional financial resources.

As we prepare to accept new challenges and responsibilities within the framework of multilateral arrangements, it would be most encouraging, as a first step, if all outstanding commitments in Agenda 21 — such as financial and technological assistance — were fulfilled within time-bound targets. In this regard, Papua New Guinea can support the important priorities which the United Nations should focus on for the next five years in the implementation of Agenda 21.

Building on the spirit of Rio, as we breathe new energy from this session, we commit ourselves to achieve sustainable development. We must aim to reverse policies and attitudes that contradict the goals and objectives of Agenda 21, and refrain from applying double standards when it comes to the concerns of sustainable development that affect the global community as a whole.

May I also add that the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests made great progress in further elaborating the forest principles and in adopting a programme of action at the international level. Instead of indulging in the positive aspects of the Panel on Forests, as a tropical timber country we are not convinced that the playing field has been levelled for sustainable development and the conservation of all species of forest resources. On that basis, we call for a stronger regime that will ensure legally binding commitments, with common and differentiated responsibilities. We have thus indicated our openness in favour of an international process on a forests convention with strong environmental provisions.

We recognize that the degradation of the environment can seriously hamper progressive development and can also have a serious impact on the quality of life. From this perspective, the expenses of implementing Agenda 21 in the critical areas of maintaining environmental quality, conservation of biodiversity, water resources and the reduction of atmospheric pollution are an important investment in sustaining the quality of life on Earth. Without such a commitment to maintain the health of our global ecology and serious efforts to sustain our ecological resources, we and future generations are doomed.

It is therefore imperative that we make a serious and critical appraisal of the current situation and learn from the mistakes of the past and move towards the progressive mobilization of financial and technical resources at the national and international level aimed at implementing the goals and objectives of Agenda 21, to achieve sustainable development at a practical level where people matter.

My country, Papua New Guinea, reaffirms its commitment to the goals and principles of Agenda 21 as a guiding blueprint towards sustainable development. We trust that this conference will set in motion a greater vigour and hope for better and progressive changes. Guided by our collective vision as custodians of the global environment, working within the framework of Agenda 21, we will be able to live up to our commitments and obligations as individuals and as nations as we enter the next millennium.

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Papua New Guinea, for his statement.

Mr. Utula U. Samana, CMG, Chairman of the delegation of Papua New Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua, Chairman of the delegation of Algeria.

Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua, Chairman of the delegation of Algeria, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Five years have elapsed since the historic Rio Conference. The results which we note are indeed modest if we compare them with the road that lies ahead of us, which is an urgent path. The world today is characterized by an exacerbation of divergences. Although the acceleration of economies opens up real prospects, it has also made the developing countries endure negative repercussions and has created new challenges. The result is the instability of those countries, their marginalization and the exclusion of a great number of them from the new international economic order. Moreover, hopes based on partnership and international cooperation as an instrument to insure sustainable development for all countries have proved remote indeed. Talks on the subject of sustainable development are experiencing a gap with regard to daily realities and are falling victim to generalities.

The developed countries undertook a number of commitments in Rio, in particular to provide for additional and new financial resources, to provide for technology transfers and ecologically clean transfers under favourable conditions and to support the efforts of the developing countries. Most of these commitments have not been respected. In addition, official development assistance is now on the decline and technology transfers have not taken place.

Within this framework, some advocate the private sector and direct foreign investment as a panacea. Although their role is undeniable in the field of development, they cannot be considered the sole instruments to replace a system of international cooperation for development. In addition, some of the developed countries advocate modalities for consumption and production that in fact are not lasting and that aim at imposing new standards on the developing countries under the pretext of alleviating the burden they bear with regard to natural resources.

The Rio Summit consecrated the principle of common but differentiated responsibility as the basis for the international community's work. Unfortunately, we are still awaiting implementation of this principle. We are also witnessing attempts to reopen negotiations on Agenda 21 on the pretext of providing broader access at the national level and of giving greater responsibility to the countries of the South.

The countries of the South have made great efforts and sacrifices which could have led to more significant results had they enjoyed the requisite support from the international community and, in particular, from their partners in the North. For its part, Algeria, like the countries of the South, has worked over the last five years towards carrying out its responsibilities at the national and international levels, as its contribution to the implementation of Agenda 21.

At the institutional level, we have established the Supreme Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development and a number of sectoral institutions at the local and national levels to ensure policies for sustainable development which reconcile protection of the environment, the sustainable use of natural resources and balanced economic and social development. Despite its economic and social difficulties, Algeria has firmly embarked on a number of initiatives designed to preserve its natural resources and ensure their sustainability, develop cover and top soil, combat desertification and soil erosion, promote development in rural areas and control sources of pollution. We have also encouraged action by civil society, in particular action by the burgeoning number of non-governmental organizations.

However, the State's room to manoeuvre has clearly diminished because of an increase in areas needing finance and a decrease in financial resources which are now allocated to other priorities. This compels Algeria to secure loans for specific projects.

Algeria believes, therefore, that this special session represents an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm the need for international cooperation within the framework of the principles and the objectives of the Rio Conference. Here, we should like to state the following.

First, the principle of common but differentiated responsibility is extremely important and we need to emphasize it to safeguard our recommendations.

Secondly, although sectoral action is urgent, this should not absolve the international community from its duty to define a global concept of development.

Thirdly, on the eve of the new millennium, the international community must adequately and realistically support the efforts of developing countries. In that context, the commitments of the countries of the North with regard to financial resources and technology transfer must be translated into realistic and quantifiable actions.

Fourth, the Commission on Sustainable Development must provide for better follow-up in these two areas in

particular, since they determine any real progress regarding implementation of the Rio commitments. Moreover, the Commission must adopt a more balanced concept of sustainable development.

Fifth, the resources of the Global Environment Facility must be increased and its activities stepped up to combat desertification.

Sixth, more generally speaking, in addition to a possible partial readjustment of debts, Algeria advocates greater participation by international financial institutions in the financing of environmental protection programmes.

Seventh, we need to provide the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with resources to enable it to discharge its various functions in the area of environmental protection throughout the world. The ministerial Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme must be adopted.

Finally, the reforms and present restructuring efforts of the Organization must back UNEP as an irreplaceable instrument for international cooperation for development in the broad sense of the word.

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Algeria for his statement.

Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua, Chairman of the delegation of Algeria, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.